

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01 OMB-01 EUR-25 /162 W

----- 122247

R 310824Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO USIA WASHDC

SECSTATE WASHDC 5554

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 4744

USIAC

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

1. BELOW IS EDITORIAL REACTION IN KL "STRAITS TIMES" TO US  
NAVAL FORCE MOVING INTO INDIAN OCEAN:

2. THE DESPATCH OF AN AMERICAN NAVAL TASK FORCE TO THE INDIAN  
OCEAN IS PART OF THE ALERT ORDERED BY PRESIDENT NIXON IN RESPONSE  
TO APPARENT SOVIET PREPARATIONS TO SEND TROOPS TO THE MIDDLE  
EAST IN SUPPORT OF THE UN'S CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION. IT IS A  
DISTURBING MOVE, THE MORE SO AS THE DISCLOSURE COMES AFTER THE  
CRISIS HAS BEEN DEFUSED. RUSSIAN INTEREST IN THE INDIAN OCEAN  
HAS BEEN APPARENT FOR THE PAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS, AND WAS WELL  
ESTABLISHED DURING THE INDIAN-PAKISTAN WAR.

3. THE AMERICAN RESPONSE WAS A SMALL TASK FORCE DRAWN  
FROM THE SEVENTH FLEET, WHICH REMAINED FOR A WHILE IN THE INDIAN  
OCEAN AFTER THE END OF THE WAR ENGAGED ON "ROUTINE TRAINING EXER-  
CISES". UNTIL THEN THE ONLY PERMANENT AMERICAN NAVAL FORCE IN THE  
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AREA WAS A SEAPLANE TENDER STATIONED AT BAHRAIN AND TWO DESTROYERS

DETACHED FROM THE ATLANTIC FLEET. THE NEW BULDUP REPEATS WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, WHERE THE RUSSIANS NOW HAVE NINETY SHIPS AND THE AMERICANS SIXTY, INCLUDING THREE AIR-CRAFT CARRIERS. INDEED A PENTAGON SPOKESMAN HAS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED THE DESPATCH OF THIS NEW TASK FORCE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN WITH THE QUIET CONFRONTATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, ADDING FOR ARAB NATIONS THE ASSURANCE THAT THE SHIPS WILL KEEP AWAY FROM THE PERSIAN GULF OIL STATES.

4. WHICH IS ALL VERY WELL AS FAR AS IT GOES. BUT BETWEEN THEM THE AMERICANS AND THE RUSSIANS ARE BLOWING THE BOTTOM OUT OF THE CONCEPTION OF A NEUTRALISED INDIAN OCEAN. THE FURTHER STATEMENT BY THE PENTAGON THAT THE SHIPS HAVE NOT BEEN SENT TO COUNTER RUSSIAN NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE AREA, BUT "SIMPLY BECAUSE WE LIKE TO BE ABLE TO BE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN FROM TIME TO TIME" IS TOO DELICIOUSLY NIAVE FOR COMMENT. IT DOES POINT UP, HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM OF CONVERTING THE INDIAN OCEAN INTO THE NEUTRAL ZONE, FOR WHICH THE LITTORAL STATES ARE PRESSING, AND WHICH WOULD COMPLEMENT MOREOVER THE NEUTRALITY OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA.

5. LAST DECEMBER THE UN ASSEMBLY'S MAIN POLITICAL COMMITTEE ADOPTED BY 72 VOTES TO NIL, WITH 35 ABSTENTIONS, A RESOLUTION TO DECLARE THE INDIAN OCEAN A ZONE OF PEACE. A COMMITTEE OF FIFTEEN NATIONS WAS APPOINTED EARLY THIS YEAR TO REPORT ON THE PROPOSAL. THERE IS STILL NO PLAN, AND NO PROGRESS. THE NEW CONFRONTATION DOES NOT THREATEN NEW CRISIS. BUT IT STRESSES THE DANGERS AND EMPHASISES THE NEED, IF THE INDIAN OCEAN IS TO BECOME A ZONE OF PEACE, FOR DETERMINED ACTION. ITEM. MAHONEY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, WAR, FOREIGN RELATIONS, NAVAL SHIPS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 31 OCT 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** KUALA LUMPUR  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t1973103/aaaaabpd.tel  
**Line Count:** 90  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** kelleyw0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 12 OCT 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <12-Oct-2001 by courtncv>; APPROVED <05-Feb-2002 by kelleyw0>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** n/a  
**TAGS:** PFOR, MOPS, XF, MY, US  
**To:** USIA STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005